diamonds and gold at several places in the country; and

(b) if so, the names of the places where prospecting is proposed to be done and the parties that are in the fray?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) The National Mineral Policy, 1993 envisages that induction of foreign participation in exploration and mining for high value and scarce minerals shall be pursued. Foreign equity investment in joint ventures in mining promoted by Indian Companies would be encouraged. While foreign investment in equity would normally be limited to 50%, this limitation would not apply to captive mines of any mineral processing industry. Enhanced equity holding can also be considered on case to case basis. The foreign firms which intend to invest in prospecting of diamond and gold have to obtain the approval of FIPB in the first instance.

As per Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 mining rights can be given only to a Indian National or a company defined in sub-section (1) of section (3) of the Companies Act, 1956. Provided that in respect of any mineral specified in the First Schedule, no prospecting licences or mining lease shall be granted except with the previous approval of the Central Government. The applications for grant of Prospecting Licence have to be filed and processed by respective State Governments as per the provisions of Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 and the rules made thereunder.

21 cases for grant of aerial prospecting licence for gold etc. have been approved by Central Government as per proposals from the respective State Governments. No aerial prospecting licence for diamond has been approved till date by the Central Government.

Machinery used by the GSI

570. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that most of the machinery used by the Geological Survey of India are old aged and outdated;

(b) if so, the steps taken to ensure the modernisation and the replacement of the old machinery in Geological Survey of India; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDERA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) For want of replacement/renewal and upgradation due to resource constraints a large number of machinery and equipment in Geological Survey of India have become old.

(b) and (c) A sum of Rs. 936.95 crores has been projected as budget estimate for replacement/renewal and upgradation of machinery and equipment during IXth Plan period.

Budget provision for GSI has been considerably enhanced during the current financial year 1997-98 to enable GSI to carry out essential replacement/renewal of mchinery and equipment.

Deletion of Limestone and Bauxite

571. SHRIMATI URMILABEN CHIMANBHAI PATEL:
SHRI ANATRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government of Gujarat has represented for the deletion of limestone and bauxite from the list of scheduled minerals shown in Schedule-I of the Mineral and Metals Regulation and Development Act, 1957;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the decision taken on the representation so far?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The proposal for deletion of Limestone and Bauxite from Schedule I of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation & Development) Act, 1957, has been discussed in the meetings of the Committee constituted under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Mines) with the Secretaries of State Government, Industry and Indian Bureau of Mines etc. as members to review the Mining Rules and procedures etc. The terms of reference of the Committee, inter-alia include review of the existing laws and procedures governing regulation and development of minerals and to recommend steps to make them compatible with the policy changes and to suggest steps to reduce delays in grant/ renewal of Prospecting Licences/Mining Leases. The Committee is also to consider and suggest further delegation of powers to the State Governments regarding grant/renewal of prospecting Licences/Mining Leases and measures to be taken to prevent illegal mining.

Exploration of Gold in Madhya Pradesh

572. DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether any applications have been received by Government under the Mines Act for exploration of gold in Madhya Pradesh, whether at the state level or at the central level;

(b) if so, which are the applicants and when have they applied;

(c) what is the procedure for disposing off the application under the Mines Act; and

(d) when will these applications be disposed?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) As per the information furnished by State Govt. of Madhya Pradesh, the following six applications for grant of prospecting licence for Gold & Associated Minerals have been received by the State Govt. of Madhya Pradesh;

Sl. No.	Name of applicant	Date of application to state Government
1.	M/s. Metmin Finance & Holding Ltd.	25.7.1996
2.	M/s. Metmin Finance & Holding Ltd.	24.7.1996
3.	M/s. Ind Agro Synergy Ltd.	04.10.1996
4.	M/s. Ind Agro Synergy Ltd.	04.10.1996
5.	M/s. Metmin Finance & Holding Ltd.	23.7.1997
6.	M/s. Hindustan Zinc Ltd.	22.9.1995

As on date no proposal for grant of mineral concession for gold from State Govt. of Madhya Pradesh is pending with Central Government.

(c) and (d) Mining rights are granted by the concerned State Govenments in accordance with provisions of Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, and the rules made thereunder. As per the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, mining rights can be given only to an Indian National or a company defined in sub-section (1) of Section (3) of the 'Companies' Act, 1956. Provided that in respect of any mineral specified in the 1st Schedule of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, no prospecting licence or mining lease shall be granted except with the previous approval of the Central Government.